

Mayor's Budget Philosophy and Objectives for City Staff

Budget Philosophy

My first budget as Mayor has been a challenging and rewarding experience. Our commitment to not increasing the property tax levy for the tenth straight year was a key element of the foundation that was used to build a creative, yet prudent budget for Saint Paul. Throughout the process, I have gained new insight into the hard-working men and women who provide city services to our residents. They are professionals who believe strongly in the need to provide the highest quality city services to the customers they serve.

We have conflicting forces in our city that motivate us to try to be all things to all people. Oftentimes, the harmony necessary to achieve that goal is simply not possible within the limited resources we have available. For example, I do believe that the State of Minnesota, faced with its own budget burdens, will reduce local government aid during the upcoming legislative session. In the face of these reductions, we must continue to hold the line on taxes in order to remain competitive within the region. We must balance this reality with the need to continue to provide quality city services, and make strategic investments in areas that will enhance the vitality and vibrancy of our urban core.

With this in mind, we will seek ways to improve the design and delivery of our parks and recreation services, enhance the marketing and promotion of our city, increase awareness of the rich cultural diversity we have in arts, culture and entertainment and above all, keep our city safe, clean and affordable.

I believe this budget accomplishes those goals and objectives. As stewards of the public trust and public assets, we must constantly confront immediate needs, but always be focused on long-term goals and objectives.

We do add positions in police, fire, code enforcement and citizen service that will respond to the immediate needs. At the same time, other investments will pay dividends in the mid-to-long term that are critical to our city.

Citizens expect, and demand, the creativity from their public officials to provide quality city services, a seamless level of stability from one budget cycle to another, and to know that responsible decisions are being made that will benefit the city for the long run.

These are the strategic investment decisions we make today. Whatever the decision—holding the line on property tax levy increases, investing more funds into public safety and infrastructure, looking for new ways to elevate our city's arts, culture and entertainment assets—we must be strategic.

I recommend the choices contained in this document to the City Council and the community as we move forward toward final adoption of next year's operating, capital and debt budgets.

Budget Objectives

The following are my State of the City priorities that departments and offices are converting into 2003 budget objectives:

Fiscal Responsibility

- No increase in property tax levy.
- Reduce costs without sacrificing basic services.
- Retain AAA bond rating.

Affordable Quality Housing

- 5,000 housing units in the next four years.
- \$20 million from foundations and private sector.

Keeping our City Safe

- Making our city safe for all people.
- Every housing/property complaint documented and acted upon.
- Inspectors visible and operating out of the field.

Capital City Education Initiative

- Parents and educators know how schools are performing.
- Increase graduation rates.
- Children read as well or better than contemporaries in Minnesota.

Accessible Public Spaces

- Great places for our citizens to play.
- Bring more people who live outside Saint Paul into our parks.

Arts, Culture and Entertainment

- Saint Paul a Mecca for artists.
- Saint Paul is Midwest center for off-Broadway productions.
- More people experience Saint Paul in new and different ways.
- Enhanced neighborhood event marketing and promotional assistance.
- Strengthened partnership with other organizations to market, promote and brand the City of Saint Paul.

Cultural Relations

- City workforce that looks like and reflects the community.
- Increase in number of businesses with diverse owners.

Riverfront Development

- Bring more people to the river.